Navigating the process of changing reservation systems:
a buyer's guide

Contents

The challenges of changing reservation systems

In the past 12 months, travel companies have demonstrated a significant need to upgrade their reservation technology. This shift is driven by **a combination of factors:**

- Connectivity to suppliers
- Growing complexity of travel bookings
- Rising in-house development costs
- Post-COVID confidence
- Incumbent supplier challenges

With many travel companies now ready to commit to long-term solutions, there is a growing shift toward upgrading reservation systems. Coupled with travellers demanding more complex itineraries and diverse options, travel companies require stronger connectivity and flexible sales tools to meet these evolving needs. This shift highlights the increasing demand for technology that can support both the rising complexity of travel bookings and the need for greater operational efficiency, making it essential for companies to adopt advanced, scalable systems.

Switching reservation systems can be a significant commitment — it requires time, resources and careful planning.

Surprisingly,
60%
of companies fail
to make a decision
after starting the process

Why?

Some of the more frequent reasons we see:

- Need for clearer strategic goals
- Emphasis on current system limitations over future potential
- Challenges in budget planning and demonstrating ROI
- Limited resources allocated to the project
- Difficulty in assessing trade-offs

However, companies with a clear Request for Proposal (RFP) and defined goals are 80% more likely to succeed.

This is a long-term partnership, often lasting a decade or more, so careful planning and selecting the right technology provider is key.

The importance of **careful planning**

In the words of our Managing Director

intuitive

"Our goal in publishing this guide is to help businesses gather the essential information needed to confidently start the process of changing reservation systems. With our deep expertise and experience, we've learned what works and what doesn't and we're here to guide you through this critical first phase. By focusing on what truly matters for your business, we set the foundation for informed decisions that drive long-term success."

Paul Nixon,
Managing Director, intuitive

The full end-to-end process
to select a new technology partner

The following outlines the complete process for selecting a new technology partner, from initial internal alignment to finalising the contract.

PLANNING

1 • Agree internally

Align on the need, strategic drivers, and evaluation process, including timing and key milestones

2 • Capture your key information

Outline your business details, key requirements and objectives to guide the selection

EVALUATION

3 • Identify potential suppliers

Compile a list of potential suppliers using internal knowledge, trade shows, online research and peer recommendations

4 • Initial screening

Share headline business information to assess general fit, solution overview and high-level commercial model

5 • Detailed evaluation

Phase 1: Gather supplier info, fit to business, customer lists and commercial models

Phase 2: Share detailed requirements, develop a scoring system and conduct discovery sessions

SELECTION

6 • Shortlist & deep dive

Narrow down to 2-3 suppliers. Hold workshops on key areas, validate value-add and confirm critical requirements

7 • Engage and refine

Collaborate on engagement plans, timelines, and refine proposals and project scope. Meet key contacts from the supplier team

8 • Finalise

Take references, review contractual terms, negotiate and finalise the contract

6-9 months
average time to a reservation system

Planning
Capture your key information

This guide is designed to streamline the early stages of the process of selecting a new reservation system, leveraging our expertise to help you begin with a solid foundation.

We focus here on the initial steps of the process, which are critical for gathering essential information and setting up a successful project, before engaging with the travel technology market.

The process begins with "Your business and objectives" section, designed to help you define your strategic goals while enabling technology suppliers to quickly assess their alignment with your needs. If there's a fit, you'll move on to the "Your functional requirements" phase, where you'll develop a focused 50–100-line RFP detailing all essential components of your project.

To assist you further, we've included a comprehensive template that works alongside this guide. **You can access the template here.**

Be sure to review our **Technology Supplier Evaluation** section **at page 13** for additional insights to help you identify the best solution for your needs.

Your business
and objectives

A clear description of your business and a well-defined set of objectives will guide your decision-making and help you select the system that best supports your growth.

This helps ensure your technology requirements are aligned with your long-term strategy, setting you up for a successful partnership.

General

A simple but essential step: providing key details about your business, operations and leadership, helps set the stage for potential technology providers.

- **Company name** _

- **Brief description of the business and operation** _

- **Sector** _

- **Website(s)** _

- **No. of employees** _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

- **Location(s)** _

- **Annual bookings** _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

- **Annual revenue / TTV** _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

- **Current reservation technology** _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

- **Key people**

  ▶ Who is running the selection process? _ _ _ _ _ _ _

  ▶ Who is the ultimate decision maker? _ _ _ _ _ _

  ▶ Who will be the main operations contact for the project delivery _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

  ▶ Who will be the project sponsor? _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Your business
and objectives

2

Internally agree on key objectives and timings, and ensure they're shared with potential suppliers. Continuously refer back to these throughout the evaluation process.

An absolutely critical step is clearly defining the value this change will bring to your business. Undertaking such a significant project comes with inevitable short-term disruptions, making it vital to stay focused on the bigger picture. Prioritise the strategic benefits and long-term impact over minor feature gaps, which are typically manageable.

Strategic Objectives and Approach

▶ **Describe why you are considering moving technology?**

   ▶ Strategic objectives   _e.g. Enable growth within existing and new markets_

   ▶ Potential value of moving (and the cost of not moving)   _e.g. Increased connectivity, off-the-shelf solution_

   ▶ Key requirements   _e.g. Booking engine, direct contracting, automated payment_

   ▶ Compelling event   _e.g. Current system end-of-life, strategic needs beyond current technology_

▶ **Project timing and milestones**   _e.g. Existing contract ends in Dec-25. Plan to be live Jan-26_

Your business
and objectives

Providing a clear overview of your travel business and operations is a quick way to assess whether a technology provider is a good fit. The more specific you are, the easier it is for providers to determine if they can meet your needs.

For example, if you're a Groups Operator, only a few providers may specialise in that sector, allowing you to focus on the most relevant options.

Your Business

● **Travel business type**
- ☐ Dynamic packaging
- ☐ Tailor-made
- ☐ Pre-packaged itineraries
- ☐ Tours
- ☐ Escorted tours
- ☐ Groups
- ☐ Hotel-only

● **Components sold**
- ☐ Accommodation
- ☐ Flights
- ☐ Transfers
- ☐ Car hire
- ☐ Ancillaries
- ☐ Tours / external packages
- ☐ Other

● **Sales channels and booking sources**
- ☐ B2B / B2C
- ☐ Web
- ☐ Call centre
- ☐ API distribution
- ☐ Cache files

It's also important to consider the broader tech ecosystem.

Many travel tech providers now integrate with best-of-breed applications for CRM, CMS, finance, and documentation. Rather than relying solely on a provider's built-in capabilities, you can leverage specialised tools through integration.

● **Technology ecosystem**
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ CRM
- ☐ CMS
- ☐ Reporting

Your functional requirements

The next crucial step in the process is defining the functional requirements for your project. This step is essential, as aligning your requirements with a supplier's system can be complex.

To help you do this, we've developed an approach that guides you through the process while helping you create a clear and focused RFP.

Our recommended method allows you to categorise each functionality as either a **"need - have now"** or a **"need - new."** This approach also **highlights any critical or specific requirements,** where you can add in-depth detail on that functionality.

The example below illustrates how to define your needs clearly, providing a structured understanding of what is essential for your project.

	Need-have NOW	Need-NEW	Specific NEED
● **Direct contracting and inventory management**			*Our biggest challenge (and opportunity) with our contracts is the complexity of the free night offers. Our biggest selling properties have many free night offers, often overlapping. This causes us pricing issues and we miss out on potential sales.*
▶ Accommodation	☑	☐	
▶ Supplier extranet	☐	☐	
▶ Transfers	☐	☐	
▶ Car hire	☐	☐	
▶ Ancillaries	☐	☐	
▶ Flights	☐	☐	
▶ Rail	☐	☐	
▶ Cruise	☐	☐	
● **Third party integrations**			
▶ Accommodation	☑	☐	
▶ Transfers	☐	☑	
▶ Car hire	☐	☑	
▶ Ancillaries	☐	☐	
▶ Flights	☑	☐	*We require multiple flight aggregators connected and the ability to pay for certain airlines by virtual credit cards. It's critical that, even for the same airline the payment approach needs to be different for each aggregator*

EXAMPLE

This framework ensures you cover all essential components, from product sourcing and pricing to packaging, selling and fulfilment, capturing every strategic need comprehensively.

Once completed, you'll have a focused, **50–100-line RFP** that provides technology suppliers with invaluable **insight into your business and requirements.**

We believe this approach is more effective than attempting to define hundreds, or even thousands, of functional requirements.

Your functional
requirements

To structure this effectively, we've divided the functional requirements into four core areas: **Buy, Manage, Sell, Fulfil.**

Tick the box to identify each as 'need - have now' or 'need - new' and fill in 'specific need' to shape the picture of your business.

Buy

	Need-have NOW	Need - NEW	Specific NEED
● **Direct contracting and inventory management**			
▶ Accommodation	☐	☐	_____
▶ Supplier extranet	☐	☐	_____
▶ Transfers	☐	☐	_____
▶ Car hire	☐	☐	_____
▶ Ancillaries	☐	☐	_____
▶ Flights	☐	☐	_____
▶ Rail	☐	☐	_____
▶ Cruise	☐	☐	_____
● **Third party integrations**			
▶ Accommodation		☐	_____
▶ Transfers		☐	_____
▶ Car hire		☐	_____
▶ Ancillaries		☐	_____
▶ Flights		☐	_____
▶ Rail		☐	_____
▶ Cruise		☐	_____

Manage

	Need-have NOW	Need - NEW	Specific NEED
● **Commercial**			
▶ Margin management	☐	☐	_____
▶ Commission management	☐	☐	_____
▶ Pricing	☐	☐	_____
▶ Discounts	☐	☐	_____
▶ Payment plans	☐	☐	_____
▶ Multi-currency /exchange rate management	☐	☐	_____
▶ Tax	☐	☐	_____
● **CRM**			
▶ B2B CRM	☐	☐	_____
▶ B2C CRM	☐	☐	_____
● **Content Management**			
▶ Accommodation	☐	☐	_____
▶ Images, descriptions, facilities, location	☐	☐	_____
▶ Deduplication	☐	☐	_____
▶ Itineraries and packages	☐	☐	_____
▶ Destination information	☐	☐	_____
▶ Errata	☐	☐	_____

Your functional
requirements

Sell
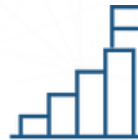
	Need-have NOW	Need - NEW	Specific NEED
● **Call centre / Sales agents**			
▸ Enquiries	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Quotes	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Reprice	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Pricing	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Payment and cancellation profiles	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Booking	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Live	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Ad hoc components	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Documentation /client communication	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Web sales**			
▸ Content	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Booking journey	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Omnichannel	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Manage my booking	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Configuration**			
▸ Brand management	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Geography and airport control	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Selling currencies	☐	☐	- - - -

If you've worked through all these steps, we also have a ready-to-use template designed to streamline the process for any supplier. **Download template**

Fulfil

	Need-have NOW	Need - NEW	Specific NEED
● **Tasks and queue management**	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Customer payments**	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Client documents and communication**	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Supplier documents and communication**	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Supplier confirmation management**	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Cancellation**	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Amendments**			
▸ Client requested	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Bulk changes	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Financial reconciliation and reporting**			
▸ Supplier payments	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Currency exposure	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Incoming payments	☐	☐	- - - -
▸ Debtors and creditors	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Operational and management reporting**	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Financial data extract**	☐	☐	- - - -
● **Company performance dashboards**	☐	☐	- - - -

Technology supplier
evaluation criteria

When evaluating potential tech suppliers, it's important to go beyond just matching your functional requirements. Assessing factors like company culture, commercial terms, delivery capabilities and innovation will give you a clearer picture of how well a supplier aligns with your business.

Consider their track record with similar customers, availability of resources and commitment to ongoing development.

A well-rounded evaluation, supported by references and case studies, ensures you choose a partner that meets both your immediate needs and long-term goals.

Key factors when
evaluating suppliers

Culture & Fit:
Alignment with your company's values and approach

Commercials:
Pricing model and long-term costs

Delivery:
Ability to meet timelines and resource availability

Innovation:
New features, roadmap and future releases

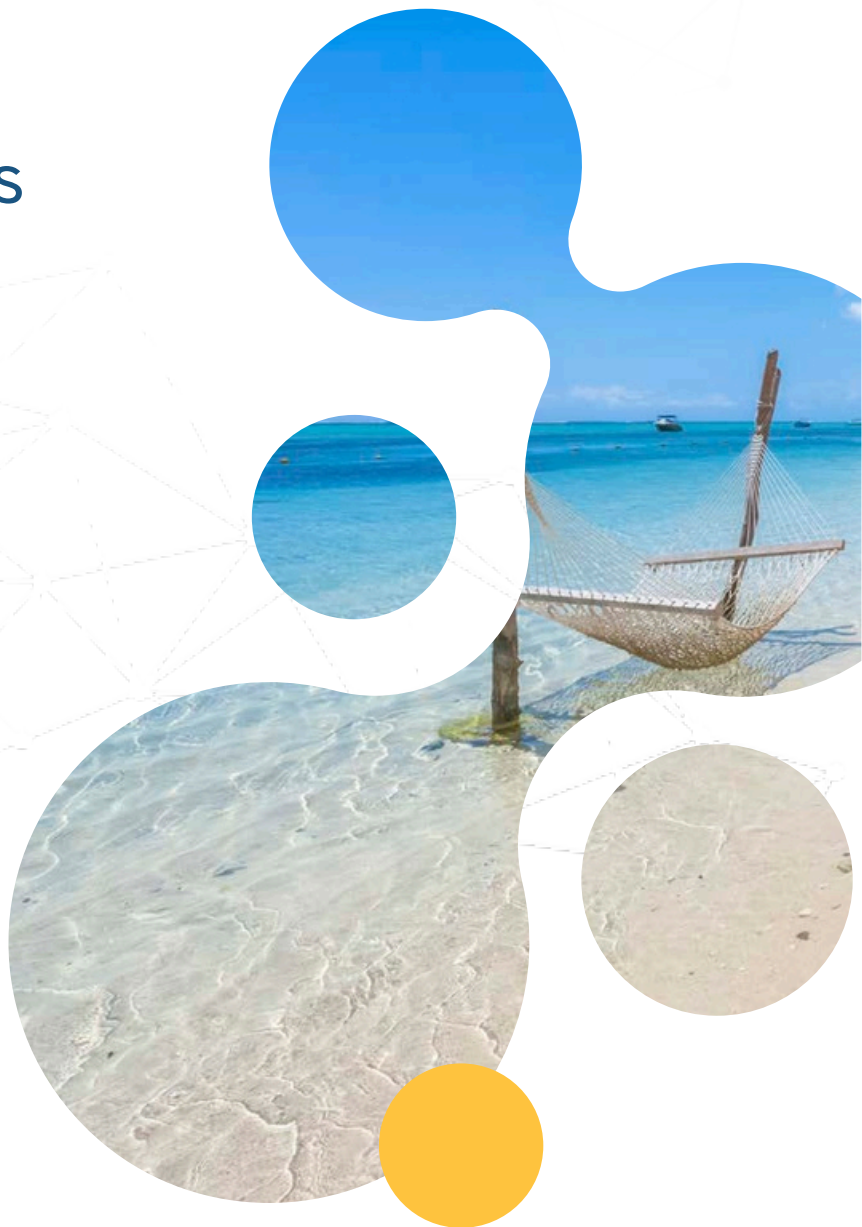**Track Record:**
Similar customers, case studies and references

Location & Support:
Proximity and ongoing support capabilities

Requirements Match:
How well their solution meets your specific needs

About US

With over 20 years of expertise, intuitive is dedicated to becoming the leading international technology provider. Based in London, our experienced team delivers scalable, innovative and customer-centric solutions tailored for tour operators, online travel agents and wholesalers. Trusted by top travel brands like Scott Dunn, Goway, On the Beach, Love Holidays and Thomas Cook, we pride ourselves on offering flexible solutions that drive success for industry leaders.

We hope this guide is helpful for when you're ready to consider a new reservation system, whether now or in the future. If you'd like to discuss your requirements or need assistance completing the template included in the guide, don't hesitate to book a consultation with our team. We're here to help you capture the key information your business needs before engaging with the travel technology market.

For more information visit:
www.intuitivesystems.com

Or contact:
sales@intuitivesystems.com